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ALASKA.

Measles and whooping cough were reported December 6 to be prevalent in Ketchikan and at Metlakahtla, an Indian village south of Ketchikan, Alaska.

HOW THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE CAN HELP IN THE ERADICATION OF PREVENTABLE DISEASES IN KENTUCKY.

By JOSEPH GOLDBERGER, Passed Assistant Surgeon, United States Public Health Service.

[A paper read by invitation at the meeting of the Kentucky State Medical Association, Louisville, Ky., Oct. 30, 1912.]

The subject originally assigned to me by your secretary for discussion was "How the United States Public Health Service can help in the investigation of preventable diseases in Kentucky." I have thought, however, that it might lead to a more profitable discussion to broaden the scope of the subject by amending it to read "How the United States Public Health Service can help in the eradication of preventable diseases in Kentucky."

Recent agitation for the creation of a much to be desired Federal department of health has served to bring out that there exists a very widespread misconception as to the power and authority of the Federal Government to act in the prevention and eradication of disease. This is well shown by the following story which has been widely quoted: A mother in Indiana whose child was dying of tuberculosis, is said to have telegraphed in vain to Washington for aid. Not long after this, cholera developed in a herd of a neighbor's hogs, and on telegraphic request, so the account runs, the Federal authorities at once sent an expert in the treatment and prevention of hog cholera. The moral of course seems obvious: "Be a hog." The story is an interesting one, but like so many interesting stories, it makes its point at the expense of the truth. It well emphasizes the keen interest of the Government in animal industry, but it is decidedly misleading as to the Government's interest in human life.

The Government, through the Bureau of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture, is prepared, as it should be, to combat contagious diseases in animals, but no more so than it is, through the United States Public Health Service, to combat those of man. The Bureau of Animal Industry attempts to control hog cholera, Texas fever, foot-and-mouth disease, and the like; but it does not undertake to treat individual cases of tuberculosis or pneumonia in cattle. In the same way the Federal Public Health Service is prepared to respond to any request for aid in the suppression and eradication of such epidemic diseases as Asiatic cholera, bubonic plague, typhoid fever, cerebrospinal meningitis, and infantile paralysis, but it does not and can not undertake to treat individual sufferers from these diseases.

The treatment of the individual must be left where it belongs—in the hands of the family doctor. The sanitary officer deals not with individuals, but with communities of individuals, and this applies with peculiar force to the Federal officers in a Government like ours.